

Medical Marijuana Patients: Play it Safe and Don't Eat the Whole Cookie!

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Medical marijuana (MM) dispensaries will soon be available for Nevada patient cardholders. Patients, many with a history of using their home grown medicine, will be able to purchase commercially prepared edible products. The Division of Public and Behavioral Health urges patients to use extreme caution when using edible forms of medication.

Why all of the concern?

Taking any new medicine presents a risk

When trying any new medication, even a prescription skin cream, users should be very aware of how their bodies react. Anyone using any new medication should self-monitor for allergic reactions, undesired side effects, or the possibility that the medication does not work as intended.

Medical marijuana potency levels are at an all-time "high"

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, its potency has increased over the last few decades. Average THC content has soared from less than 1% to nearly 13%. ¹ It is important to be cautious when using new marijuana products, especially edibles.

Feeling the effects of edibles takes more time

Unlike the quick effects felt with inhaling, MM edibles must be digested and metabolized before the effects are felt. These slower absorption times are important! Hence, especially when using a specific edible for the first time, patients are urged to take a very small amount of the edible and then to wait one to two hours before taking more. It may take that long for the effects to be felt, which with MM edibles are felt for longer periods of time. ² This is a good thing for pain control and if the amount you have in your system is correct, but not a good thing if you have overdosed.

Even if the edible has dosing instructions, the THC in the item may not be evenly distributed. One bite could contain hardly any THC, while another bite could put you over the edge. ³

The risk of marijuana overdose is serious

An overdose of marijuana can lead a person to feel anxiety or have panic attacks or other acute psychotic episodes. Confusion, disorientation, hallucinations or paranoia can compound the situation. Physically, one may experience a rapid heartbeat (tachycardia), impaired motor ability, or an inability to coordinate voluntary muscle movement (ataxia). Overdose symptoms can be deadly if they occur while you are driving. ⁴

And don't forget that a visit to the emergency room can cost upwards of \$1,000.00!

Multiple variables create dosing uncertainties

Labels on edible products may be misleading. Even if you know the level of THC (potency), the patient's weight, metabolism and tolerance level also play a big part. It is wise for patients to compare MM with pain killers and not take them on an empty stomach to help avoid adverse effects. ⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Division of Public and Behavioral Health Medical Marijuana Program recommends that patients play it safe with MM edibles. When trying a new edible product:

- Start with a very small bite and wait 1-3 hours to feel the effects
- If no effects are felt, the second bite should be smaller than the first. Then wait some more
- Do not mix MM edibles with alcohol
- Eat a nutritious meal before taking your MM dose
- Use these precautions whenever trying a new edible MM product



1. *Is Super Weed, Super Bad?* <http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/09/health/weed-potency-levels/>
2. *Marijuana cannabinoids-oral and transdermal methods*
http://www.naturalnews.com/034425_marijuana_cannabinoids_medicine.html
3. *The Trouble with Producing Cannabis-infused Edible Products.* <http://www.cwanaTTTlytical.com/trouble-edibles>
4. *Is Eating Marijuana Really Riskier Than Smoking It?* <http://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2014/06/04/is-eating-marijuana-really-riskier-than-smoking-it/>
5. *3 Problems Surrounding Medical Marijuana Edibles*
<http://www.medicinalmarijuanaassociation.com/medical-marijuana-blog/3-problems-surrounding-medical-marijuana-edibles>.